



NEWS RELEASE

Today's Date: Wednesday, May 17, 2006, -- 06-027
District: District 2 - Redding
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Caltrans Fire Prevention Practices

REDDING – The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 2 Maintenance crews will begin vegetation removal operations along State highways in the seven counties of District 2, (Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Siskiyou, Tehama and Trinity).

Mowing operations will reduce fire loads, increase sight distance and create a defensible zone around state highways. Caltrans Maintenance crews begin mowing after grasses harden off and go to seed. Allowing grass to reseed helps to strangle noxious weeds the following season but means the grass must be cut dry.

For safety, crews undertake precautions by cutting early in the day and consider such things as barometric pressure, humidity and wind speed. Mowing teams always have fire suppression equipment on hand. Crews will also be establishing bare ground fire strips along roadway shoulders on lower elevation state highways by use of herbicides.

Throughout the winter and spring the California Conservation Corps and the California Department of Forestry have been performing fuel load eradication by clearing and burning storm damaged trees and fallen limbs.

Motorists are encouraged to follow these fire prevention guidelines:

- Keep your car in sound mechanical condition, assuring there are no parts hanging or dragging underneath the vehicle that may create a spark. This is the number one cause of roadside fires.
- Don't throw burning cigarettes or matches from your vehicle.
- When towing a trailer, ensure that the safety chains are properly installed and not dragging on the roadway.
- Don't pull off the roadway into high grasses; hot catalytic converters can ignite the dry grass.

Caltrans reminds motorists in the event of a fire incident the roadway may be closed due to the proximity of the fire, low visibility due to smoke and/or the need for emergency vehicles to occupy the roadway. To report fires please call 911.

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NOTE: An electronic version of this news release is available on the Internet at the following web address: http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist2/news_releases.htm